Oil Facilities, and Castro, Saved

By Jack Anderson

The story that American adventurers tried to bomb a Havana oil refinery, though it caused a bigger blast in the newspapers than in Havana, gave oilmen the nervous skitters.

Anderson

It also brought to light an earlier incident, never reported in the public print, which occurred during the Cuban Bay of Pigs fiasco.

A freedom fighter plane, loaded with bombs, radioed that it was over the Esso refinery in Havana and asked permission to bomb it, along with the nearby Texaco and Shell refineries.

Destruction of the three big facilities would have paralyzed the Castro war machine within weeks. But the CIA command post ordered the plane to ignore the refineries and look for gun emplacements to bomb.

Later, Mike McLaney, an American gambler who ran a casino in Havana and stayed on for 18 months after Castro's takeover, sent the CIA a detailed plan for knocking out the three refineries. But instead of getting his plan approved, McLaney got an urgent phone call warning him not to attempt such a thing under any circumstances.

Behind these incidents, of course, was the profits-before-patriotism attitude of the oil tycoons who would not sacrifice their facilities to overthrow Castro, but would rather gamble on getting them back intact at some later date.

The incidents also illustrate the awesome power of big oil inside the Government.

Postal Cuts

Postmaster General J. Edward Day is known as the wittiest and most eloquent member of President Kennedy's Cabinet. He can amuse a visitor or a whole audience with an endless repertoire of anecdotes about the Post Office Department, its history, and the histories of the men who preceded him as head of the largest civilian agency in the Federal Government.

But when the Postmaster General went before the Senate Appropriations Committee to appeal for reinstatement of $92 million the House had slashed from his budget, he must have had a hard time laughing at Chairman A. Willis Robertson's joke.

The normally dour solon from Virginia is just as budget conscious as his colleague, Sen. Harry Byrd, but he seemed to think it was funny that the House had slashed the PO's budget $92 million without giving Day a hint about where he could save the money.

In reporting on the Post Office budget, the House Committee, which is headed by another Virginian, Rep. J. Vaughan Gary of Richmond, agreed with Day that there would be 2.4 billion more pieces of mail to deliver next year (that is more mail than is handled in Belgium in a whole year), and commended the Department for its efficiency. But simultaneously they cut the budget so badly that it will be necessary for the Post Office to hire 8000 fewer persons in the fiscal year 1964 than it will have at the end of 1963.

In presenting his budget, Day had already figured on an efficiency gain of 1.24 per cent, which represents a saving of 7000 man years, but despite the fact that both the committee and the Post Office agree there will be more mail, the Committee decided Day could get by with even fewer people.

"The Other Body"

Senator Robertson, who doesn't want to get into a fight with his colleague from Virginia, referred to a colloquy that had taken place on the House floor between his friend Rep. Gary and another famous budget cutter, Rep. Otto Passman of Louisiana, who is more famous for his attacks on foreign aid than the Post Office.

Being careful to refer to the House of Representatives as "the other body," the Senator from Virginia read from the Congressional Record without revealing names.

"Mr. X says: 'and, of course, we have a record in this committee of being extremely fair. When this bill goes to the other body ("that's us," interjected Robertson, his eyes twinkling), in all probability if those who are presently complaining ("that's you," he interrupted again, pointing to Day) could make a case that we have cut it a few million too much, it can, and always has been, reinstated. That is the record, is it not?

"'Mr. Y: Absolutely.

"'Mr. X: And this committee has a record of being extremely fair. In a few instances, in the 17 years that the gentleman has been on this committee, the committee has made cuts, perhaps a little too deep, but then we readily made available a supplemental appropriation so that the service would not be disrupted.'"

The Senate Appropriations Committee finally took the hints of Mr. X and Mr. Y and reinstated $60.5 million of the money cut by the "other body."

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Jack Anderson, substituting for Drew Pearson, will report on Parade magazine's next move in the "Congressmen Who Cheat" controversy over WTOP radio tonight at 6:40.